



## @USNPEOPLE WEEKLY WIRE

### 1) In live call-in show, Navy personnel officials talk hair, uniforms, pay/ 3 FEB 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

Stars & Stripes – Jennifer Hlad

Sailors stationed all over the world peppered the chief of naval personnel with questions Tuesday in a live all-hands call on topics ranging from hair styles and uniforms to retirement benefits and the length of deployments. Moran also tried to tamp down concerns about the recent release of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission report. The Navy has another month to analyze the report and will communicate with sailors as they do so, he said, but the recommendations from the commission are just that: recommendations.

### 2) Commission Ideas Draw Bipartisan Praise On Capitol Hill/ 6 FEB 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

Military.com – Tom Philpott

After decades of rejecting military compensation studies, whether from teams of Pentagon analysts or independent blue ribbon panels, Congress this year appears to be embracing the clever weave of proposals prepared by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

### 3) Seeking Chiefs to Update Advancement Exams/ 2 FEB 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

Navy chiefs (E7-E9) on active duty, Full Time Support (FTS), and Reservists on Active Duty for Special Work (ADSW) who are interested and desire to make a difference in the future of their rating are encouraged to apply as a fleet subject matter expert (FSME) for their rating's Advancement Exam Readiness Review (AERR) at the Navy Advancement Center (NAC) in Pensacola, Fla.

### 4.) Navy Creates Designation to Identify Officers with Pacific Region Expertise/ 6 FEB 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

The AQDs align with the Asia Pacific (APAC) Hands concept, which supports the "rebalance toward the APAC region." The goal of the APAC Hands program is to develop officers with enhanced regional and operational understanding who then are able to continue to progress to senior decision making levels within their communities.

### 5.) NAVADMIN bi-weekly roll-up:

Every other week, we roll up the various NAVADMINS. Below are the latest:

- Updated Guidance for the Inclusion and Command Review of Information On Sex-Related Offense in Personnel Service Records: [\[LINK\]](#)
- FY-15 Senior Enlisted Continuation Board – Performance – Board Based Board for Continuations of Senior Enlisted (Active/Reserve) Personnel with greater than 19 Years of Service: [\[LINK\]](#)
- 2015 Active Duty Fund Drive in Support of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society: [\[LINK\]](#)
- OPNAVINST 7220.8 Revision: [\[LINK\]](#)

To sign up for the @USNPeople Weekly Wire, email [usnpeople@gmail.com](mailto:usnpeople@gmail.com),  
or find it online at [www.navy.mil/cnp](http://www.navy.mil/cnp)

## **1) In live call-in show, Navy personnel officials talk hair, uniforms, pay/ 3 FEB 15 [\[LINK\]](#)**

Stars & Stripes – Jennifer Hlad

Sailors stationed all over the world peppered the chief of naval personnel with questions Tuesday in a live all-hands call on topics ranging from hair styles and uniforms to retirement benefits and the length of deployments. Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Bill Moran told sailors that while there is no plan to reinstitute imminent danger pay for 5th Fleet, and no move to incentivize back-to-back deployments, the Navy is working to decrease the length of deployments back to seven months.

“We are on a path right now ... to gradually reduce the length of deployments around the globe,” he said, but doing so will take time because of the maintenance backlog.

Still, he said, Navy leaders are committed to reducing carrier strike group and expeditionary strike group deployments to seven months by 2017.

Moran also tried to tamp down concerns about the recent release of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission report.

The Navy has another month to analyze the report and will communicate with sailors as they do so, he said, but the recommendations from the commission are just that: recommendations. The report won’t change current benefits, and even if the retirement system does change down the road, active-duty servicemembers will be able to keep the current plan or opt into the new plan, depending on their preference, Moran said.

“Breathe through your noses, don’t hyperventilate,” he said, assuring sailors that retirement pay and benefits aren’t going away.

Other questions concerned issues such as uniforms, physical readiness tests and hair. A chief on the USS America asked why the updated Navy hair regulations allow twists, but not dreadlocks.

Master Chief April Beldo, fleet master chief for manpower, personnel, training and education, said she had taken on the job of researching dreadlocks, and spoke to several beauticians about the style.

The issue, she said, is that dreadlocks are harder to maintain.

“If I have a twist hairstyle and it’s not in regulation, I can fix it immediately. That’s not the case with dreadlocks,” she said. With dreadlocks, the hair fuses together and the only solution would be to cut it, she said.

Beldo also told sailors that there are no new initiatives for uniforms, though the service dress uniform has been updated for men and women, and that will be phased in over time.

Moran said the Navy has gotten a lot of negative feedback on the fire-resistant coveralls sailors are required to wear at sea. Many sailors have said the uniform is very heavy, does not breathe, and discolors when washed.

“We’ve taken all that feedback ... and we’ve now redesigned that uniform, and we’re on the process of going out on bids” to update the uniform, Moran said.

Moran also addressed concerns about the 1 percent reduction in housing allowances, noting that when he was a junior officer, sailors only received 75 percent of BAH.

“We’ve gotten used to 100 percent, which is very good,” he said. “All we’re doing now is trying to arrest the growth of BAH.”

The allowance is determined by an independent source outside the Navy, based on cost of living and the rental market, he said. But in many locations, landlords set rental costs according to the allowance.

“We’ve got to be careful about not just growing BAH because we can,” Moran said. “We’ve got to put some controls in there, and the start of that is this initial step of 1 percent, and we hope we don’t have to go any further than that.”

<http://www.stripes.com/news/in-live-call-in-show-navy-personnel-officials-talk-hair-uniforms-pay-1.327560>

## **2) Commission Ideas Draw Bipartisan Praise On Capitol Hill/ 6 FEB 15 [LINK]**

Military.com – Tom Philpott

There is rising confidence across the Senate and House armed services committees that 2015 will be the year Congress passes legislation to modernize military compensation, with an alternative to traditional 20-year retirement and perhaps replacing the triple-option TRICARE health program.

After decades of rejecting military compensation studies, whether from teams of Pentagon analysts or independent blue ribbon panels, Congress this year appears to be embracing the clever weave of proposals prepared by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) said it was “extraordinary” that nine commissioners endorse their proposals unanimously. So before her colleagues are “off to the races trying to politicize” them, she advised, they ought to “pause a moment and realize that you might just have gotten this right, and this might be exactly what we need to be doing.”

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), new chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, pledged to keep the wellbeing of military members and families “foremost in our thoughts as we deliberate the commission recommendations. But upholding our sacred obligation to them does not mean resisting change at every turn. We must not shrink from the opportunity before us to create a modern system of compensation and retirement benefits that would provide greater value and choice.”

The new chairman of the military personnel subcommittee, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), warned commission critics, “If you think they missed a mark, we will certainly listen to you. But we’re not going to play the demagoguery game because change is afoot and it’s necessary.”

McCain and Graham have told staff they hope to include at least some commission recommendations in the fiscal 2016 defense authorization bill.

As military folks try to grasp the complex commission plans, Congress this week also received a fresh set of proposals from the Obama administration, part of its fiscal 2016 defense budget request, to continue to dampen growth in basic pay and allowances. That budget package asks Congress to consolidate TRICARE options, raise TRICARE fees sharply on working-age retirees, set a first-ever enrollment fee for new Medicare-eligible retirees using TRICARE for Life, and raise pharmacy co-payments.

Obama wants the January 2016 military pay raise capped at 1.3 percent, a point below percent wage growth in the private sector. His budget proposes a string of “limited” pay raises through 2020. It would continue to damp annual adjustments to Basic Allowance for Housing until recipients pay 5 percent of rental and utility costs out of pocket.

The budget also proposes more cuts to annual subsidy for the Defense Commissary Agency, enough so that base grocery store patrons see store operating days or hours cut, although not below five days a week. These budget changes would lower compensation costs by \$1.7 billion next year and by \$18 billion through 2020. They are separate from commission recommendations. Several, such as consolidating TRICARE options,

even conflict with commission plans. Commissioners want TRICARE replaced with a menu of private sector insurance options and two-part Basic Allowance for Health Care (BAHC). One part would cover full premiums of a mid-range health insurance plan. A self-directed portion of BAHC, to cover co-pays and deductibles, could be windfall cash for families if they become discerning users of their health insurance benefit.

The most uncertain feature of the commission's health plan is its vision that private insurance plans would be required to include base medical staff and facilities in their networks of providers, and that those care providers would see enough challenging cases to sustain wartime medical skills. To help in that regard, the commission proposes of a new joint readiness command to oversee all aspects of readiness including medical skills at base hospitals.

On retirement, current members could stay under their High-3 plan, which pays an immediate annuity after at least 20 years service, or they could shift to the new plan mandated for new entrances. It would blend a reduced defined benefit, one that pays 40 percent rather than 50 percent of basic pay as an immediate annuity after 20 years, with a Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) that has government matching of member contributions up to 5 percent of basic pay. After only two years, members would be fully vested in their TSP accounts to take with them if they separate short of 20 years.

The commission proposes using Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to protect force retention under plan. The education benefit could be transferred to dependents only after 10 years of service and in exchange for serving only two more years. At the 12-year mark, members could get lump sum continuation pay equal to at least two-and-a-half months' basic pay, if they agree to serve four more years. At 20 years, they would be eligible for immediate annuity equal to at least 40 percent of basic pay. Or they could opt for a reduced annuity and some retirement cash in a lump sum, or they could get a bigger lump sum and defer any annuity until they also are eligible for social security. That old age annuity would equal what peers receive who had elected to accept full annuities at retirement.

The commission said computer modeling shows this more complex choice of benefits still would produce healthy retention rates, save billions of dollars a year, and give the vast majority of members who leave service short of 20 years a nest egg equivalent to civilian employer 401(k) plans.

More than 90 percent of current first-termers likely would shift to the new retirement system if given that option, commissioners testified. Some lawmakers on the armed services committees gushed over the plan, calling it bold and thorough. Others were cautious but not critical.

The 70-year-old retirement system and a TRICARE program launched in the mid-1990s "were appropriate for their time," said McCain. "But clearly times have changed."

Still to be heard from are military associations and veterans groups who have criticized past plans to overhaul compensation as radical and risky, endangering the nation's defense.

<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2015/02/commission-ideas-draw-bipartisan-praise-on-capitol-hill/>

### **3) Seeking Chiefs to Update Advancement Exams/ 2 FEB 15 [LINK]**

By Terrina Weatherspoon, Defense Media Activity

Although it has been a long time since I've taken an advancement exam, there are two things I will always remember about the experience: the relief I felt when I knew the answer to a question, and the frustration I felt when a question was totally irrelevant.

Seeing several questions about dark room photo processing when the dark room on the ship had been gutted and converted to storage space two years earlier, didn't sit well with me. Who was writing these test questions and why did they hate us?

Fast forward a decade through rating mergers, advancements in technology and several manpower overhauls and one thing remains consistent, the need for relevant, real-world rating exams. And this is where chief petty officers are being asked to step up.

Navy chiefs (E7-E9) on active duty, Full Time Support (FTS), and Reservists on Active Duty for Special Work (ADSW) who are interested and desire to make a difference in the future of their rating are encouraged to apply as a fleet subject matter expert (FSME) for their rating's Advancement Exam Readiness Review (AERR) at the Navy Advancement Center (NAC) in Pensacola, Fla.

Each enlisted rating has unique FSME requirements, so the right mix of skills and knowledge are important.

"You want the right people to go - folks who are truly the experts in their rate," said Chief Legalman Ronnie Ratliff. "Information changes, things are updated and having that awareness of the important facets of your job, where the Navy is headed is all crucial. It's all vital to the success of your rate. It should not be taken lightly. The future of the rate rests with you, as most questions are held in the bank for several years; we have to ensure only the most relevant information makes it to the test."

The application to volunteer as an FSME for advancement exam development must be endorsed by the commanding officer or officer in charge, as well as the command master chief, senior chief or chief of the boat prior to submission to the Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center (NETPDTC).

"I helped re-write the Aviation Structural Mechanic test," said Chief Aviation Structural Mechanic Sean Bassett. "Ten-plus hours a day verifying information, references, publications and the usefulness of the questions. It was a two-week long review. A lot of work, but I absolutely 100 percent feel like I made a difference."

Bassett remembers taking advancement exams throughout his career and getting stuck on questions that had long since been outdated. He wished back then that he could change things and those wishes are coming true now.

"Me and the rest of the subject matter experts took great pride in our work," said Bassett. "I would most certainly recommend this to a fellow chief. It provides you with insight and feedback to take back to the fleet. And the need never ends. With regards to my rate, we are constantly using new technology and processes."

The reviews run one or two weeks in length with each rating being reviewed about every two years. Chiefs who are selected are responsible for determining the content of E4 through E7 rating advancement exams and making sure that the latest publications are used.

"The best thing that I took away - beyond that of ensuring the questions accurately test what Sailors in my rating should know - was that I learned the process of how the questions are analyzed after the exams," said Master Chief Musician Jim Ramsey. "Each question has statistics tied to them. For example: If a question is too hard/easy at the PO3 level, the exam writers can either tailor this question to make it applicable for the PO3 exam or bump it up to the PO2 exam. Additionally, the test writers decide as a group what subject each paygrade should be tested on. The exam writers are providing Fleet-wide input into the rating exam with input from several subject matter experts."

Chiefs with experience in multiple platforms or recent experience on a major rating skill-set are highly desirable.

"I believe, and even today still brief to other chiefs, test writing was one of the most rewarding Navy experiences in my career of 20 years," said Senior Chief Cryptologic Technician (Maintenance) Christopher Brown. "To be there on exam day to see your finished product, then to see Sailors advance from it and state the questions were relevant to what they do, and relevant to our community was humbling."

"I would say be prepared to work," said Chief Musician Patrick Hawes. "It's eight to 10 hours a day of looking at test questions, verifying the accuracy of those questions and making sure the references are correct for each question in that rating's test bank. Overall, I loved it! It's one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in 21 years in the Navy. You leave feeling that you are making a difference for the future of your rating."

A lot has changed since I've taken an advancement exam - and that's a good thing. Today, under the new AERR process, exams are more representative of the work being done in the Fleet. And that is due to the hard work of the dedicated chief petty officers willing to invest in the future of their rates. We now know who writes these things, but for anyone who just finished taking an advancement exam, it may still feel a bit like they hate us.

To take part in the AERR process, visit <https://www.nko.navy.mil/group/navy-advancement-center/advancement-examination-readiness-review-aerr->. This CAAC enabled link provides the scheduled dates for ratings, eligibility and nomination package requirements, and other pertinent information regarding AERR events.

#### **4.) Navy Creates Designation to Identify Officers with Pacific Region Expertise/ 6 FEB 15 [\[LINK\]](#)**

From Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The Navy has created five Additional Qualification Designators (AQD) to identify officers with experience and education relating to the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) area of responsibility (AOR).

In an effort to identify and manage the talent that exists in the Navy, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus wanted to create a way of tracking those with regional expertise so they can be effectively used.

The AQDs align with the Asia Pacific (APAC) Hands concept, which supports the "rebalance toward the APAC region." The goal of the APAC Hands program is to develop officers with enhanced regional and operational understanding who then are able to continue to progress to senior decision making levels within their communities.

The five PACOM AOR-focused AQDs are structured to identify increasing levels of regional proficiency. This proficiency is gained through education or experience, or a combination of both. The AQDs align with the regional proficiency skill level guidelines outlined in the Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction 5160.70, Management of DOD Language and Regional Proficiency Capabilities and are applicable both to billets and officers of all designators. The AQDs will facilitate distribution, requirements identification, and personnel tracking.

More information on the AQD series and corresponding requirements for each level are found in the Manual of Navy Officer Manpower and Personnel Classifications, Volume I, and on the Navy Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) website at [http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/career/language\\_culture/pages/default2.aspx](http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/career/language_culture/pages/default2.aspx).

Eligible officers will be coded with an AQD corresponding to the appropriate level of PACOM AOR-related

experience and/or education. Experience typically will be accumulated by serving in AQD-coded billets, which are aligned to existing community requirements (e.g. regional desk officers, attaches and other embassy personnel, intelligence staffs, operational planners, public affairs officers). Because APAC Hands will be assigned to billets consistent with their designators, they will remain competitive within their communities.

All commands are highly encouraged to identify APAC Hand positions that may require or be enhanced by regional knowledge. Typically, these billets will be found on staffs at the operational or strategic level and will be related to the work required by the incumbent rather than based on a physical location. Coding billets will facilitate opportunities for education en route, which should reduce manning shortfalls and minimize the requirement for on the job training to learn regional dynamics.

Officers who already have qualifying experience and/or education may self-nominate for an APAC Hands AQD. Information on how to apply, along with other amplifying information, can be found in NAVADMIN 034/15.

For more information, visit Navy's LREC website and the Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/navylanguageregionalexpertiseandcultureoffice>.

For more news from Chief of Naval Personnel, visit [www.navy.mil/local/cnp/](http://www.navy.mil/local/cnp/).

#### **5.) NAVADMIN bi-weekly roll-up:**

Every other week, we roll up the various NAVADMINS. Below are the latest:

- Updated Guidance for the Inclusion and Command Review of Information On Sex-Related Offense in Personnel Service Records: [\[LINK\]](#)
- FY-15 Senior Enlisted Continuation Board – Performance – Board Based Board for Continuations of Senior Enlisted (Active/Reserve) Personnel with greater than 19 Years of Service [\[LINK\]](#)
- 2015 Active Duty Fund Drive in Support of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society: [\[LINK\]](#)
- OPNAVINST 7220.8 Revision: [\[LINK\]](#)